DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 173 EA 013 632

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TITLE Rationale for Community Volunteers in Schools.
INSTITUTION Howard Univ., Washington, D.C. Eastern Teacher Corps Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Center.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Teacher Corps.
PUB DATE Aug 80
CONTRACT 300-79-0312
NOTE 21p.; Prepared in collaboration with the Texas Teacher Corps Network.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Benefits; *Educational Benefits; Elementary Secondary Education; Paraprofessional School Personnel; *Recruitment; Resource Materials; *Volunteers; Volunteer Training
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Corps

ABSTRACT

In seeking to provide Teacher Corps personnel with resource materials that can be utilized in establishing school volunteer programs, this booklet offers a brief history of volunteerism in American schools, reasons for establishing volunteer programs, and information about where and how to recruit volunteers. Volunteerism was an early tradition in the American educational system, but has declined as schools have become more institutionalized and subject to the control of professional educators. As retrenchment becomes a byword in school finance, volunteers can help to compensate for inequality of educational opportunities resulting from inadequate resources and to provide services to children with unique and special needs. Successful recruitment of volunteers depends on the clear communication of the positive impact such a program can have on student learning. Recruitment strategies must consider changing social conditions, such as the growing number of working mothers. If a volunteer program is presented as an opportunity to gain skills and experience, or to obtain or upgrade a job, participation will be more widespread. (Author/WD)

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RATIONALE FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOLS

Prepared by:

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for the

Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Centers

and the

Texas Teacher Corps Network

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RCTR Teacher Corps

Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Center

EA 013 632

AUGUST, 1980

"This Project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under contract number 300790312. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, nor does mention of trade names, commerical products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government."

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FOREWORD

In today's educational systems, utilization of school volunteers as supplemental resources is becoming more popular and more essential each year. As inflation continues to spiral upward, forcing the cost of providing educational services to the public, more and more school districts are turning to volunteers to assist in providing classroom services and other school duties. Many school systems, realizing the potential value which volunteers can provide, have demonstrated the effectiveness of such programs and have implemented volunteer service programs on a permanent basis.

Teacher Corps has advocated use of volunteers in its projects for over a decade. During this period, much has been written and disseminated about how to start and run school volunteer programs on an informal basis but little information from previous Teacher Corps sites is easily accessible today to those projects which seek to explore the benefits of starting a school volunteer program through the Teacher Corps project's resources. Recruitment and Community Technical Resource (RCTR) Centers, as part of their contractual responsibilities have sought to provide projects with materials that can serve as helpful resources for establishing school volunteer programs. This booklet, Rationale for Community Involvement in Schools, by Richard "Pete" Mesa, Superintendent of Schools in Milpitas, California, provides a brief history of volunteerism in America's schools and suggests why schools should establish volunteer programs. Mesa discusses where and how to recruit volunteers to serve in school systems.

The Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Centers hope that Teacher Corps project members will find this booklet a useful resource for starting or strengthening school volunteer programs that can last beyond the life of

Teacher Corps. Comments or suggestions regarding the needs for other kinds of support materials should be mailed to Ms. Velma Robinson, Teacher Corps, 400 Maryland Avenue, S. W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

Donald W. Parker, Director
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RATIONALE FOR COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS IN THE SCHOOLS

Many community persons do not feel that they can help directly to make schools better or that even if they could that their help is wanted or needed. School personnel also are often ignorant of the valuable services that lay-people can provide and sometimes even fear the direct involvement of community members in the schools. In recent years, as school systems have become larger, more "corporate-like" in structure, and more professionalized, they have become more distant from local communities. Also, at the same time, schools have come under increasingly strong criticism from the public. Many attribute this dissatisfaction to the seperation created between schools and local communities by excluding citizen involvement because of the corporate structure and professionalization of the schools. In this climate, powerful rationales are needed to persuade citizens to participate in schools and to convince the professionals to welcome them. The purpose of this section is to provide a rationale for the Teacher Corps person responsible for developing volunteer programs.

Volunteerism has been a strong tradition in American schools. Volunteerism has always been an American tradition. It had its roots in the necessity for mutual help and cooperation that survival on the American frontier required. Frontier neighbors or community members volunteered their labor, skills, and resources to each other not only for their mutual benefit but also for the broader good of the total community. In this spirit, as soon as a community established itself, it worked together to establish and build essential institutions such as churches and schools. Citizens contributed virtually everything toward the establishment and maintenance of schools. The land upon which the schools were built, the materials and labor to build them, the money

to hire the teacher and purchase books and materials were all originally volunteered before such support became formalized later in our history as taxes.

The services volunteered did not stop with the building of the school. Where housing was scarce, families volunteered to board the teacher. Wood to heat the schoolhouse in the winter was volunteered, as was the labor to chop it.

During this period in the history of schools, community and school contact was intimate and close resulting in strong bonds between the schools and local communities. Community members had much say in how the schools operated. They felt a strong sense of ownership and control of their schools.

It is clear that schools on the American frontier and through much of the history of this country could not have survived without the countless number of volunteers that offered their work and resources to establish and sustain them. It is also clear that this tradition of involvement by citizens with the schools created feelings of ownership of and confidence in the schools that schools need desperately to regain. The tradition of involvement that created the feelings and support and ownership has been eroded by the increasing tendency to make education the domain of only professionals at the same time that there is increasing evidence that parents feel they don't have enough say or knowledge about what goes on in schools. The tradition of citizens' participation in the schools at every level is so deeply woven in the fabric of the American culture that citizens' confidence in schools will not be restored until the school programs reflect their contributions and involvement.

New reasons why volunteers in the schools are essential:

To compensate for inequality of opportunity

As schools became established in this country and took on the aura of professionalism and corporations, both the public and professionals seems to have agreed for a time that the services of citizens were no longer needed. In recent years, however, new reasons have emerged from social and educational developments that resulted in a resurgence of need for volunteers in the schools. One of the new thrusts in the uses of volunteerism grows out of the increased awareness among many people of the inequalities in educational opportunity that exist in our schools. Drawing upon the energy, intelligence, and skills of volunteers is one of the most potent strategies expected to compensate for such inequalities of opportunity. Thus, the school system too poor to provide paid tutorial assistance to low achieving children can obtain such help if volunteers can be recruited.

To provide for children with unique and special needs that schools are required to serve.

American schools are being squeezed between two powerful forces moving in opposite directions. There is a general trend to reduce funds for schools caused by the public's increasing reluctance or ability to tax itself. There is a countering trend toward a steep rise in the cost of operating the schools caused by inflation, demands for costlier services such as individualized instruction, proficiency testing, etc., and the requirements to serve new populations with special programs. Populations such as the handicapped, bilinqual, and gifted students require much more individualized assistance and impose more demands on the schools even as they receive fewer resources with which to meet them.

New developments in curriculum and instruction that place demands on school resources.

In addition to the demands of special populations, new curricular developments are also straining the resources of the public schools. Increasingly the parents expect individualization of instruction through small group or tutorial instruction, rapid feedback to students on their work, close monitoring of student progress, more comprehensive reporting of student progress to parents, expansion of the school's role to include the maturing of a child's social and emotional development as well as his academic growth. All these conditions dictate that schools need to reach out for the assistance of volunteers if they are to survive to accomplish their mission of educating today's children.

How do volunteers help children learn?

This is the most important question that Teacher Corps organization of volunteer programs must be able to answer convincingly. Many low-income and minority group parents unfamiliar with schools systems have little confidence that they can help make schools more effective. Most programs imply that volunteers need more education and skills than most of them feel they possess. For example, volunteer roles are generally described as working with small groups of children, tutoring, typing, correcting student work, preparing materials for teachers, etc. Community members who do not have confidence in the strength of their skills will not volunteer for these roles. However, they might volunteer for training to gain skills for these roles or perhaps others if they understood how important their presence of participation in the schools is to the learning of their children. We believe that successful recruitment of volunteers depends on strong and clear communication to all

parents of their impact on children's learning. The following are ways in which community volunteers directly impact children's learning in schools.

The participation of culturally different parents in the schools has a positive impact on self-esteem and confidence of cultural different children.

Children are constantly assessing their environment to determine where they fit in it. Part of this process is how the child defines his importance and value in the environment. Low-income and minority children sometimes never see their adult counterpart parents functioning competently and/or equally with high status people such as teachers and administrators. They often conclude therefore that neither their parents nor they can function or belong in settings like schools.

The visible presence of parents of culturally different children in the schools helps establish for such children that the school respects and values them and their culture. It is important that participation of such parents be in various roles and at all levels of status in the school because the status of parents is often transferred to their children.

The effect of parent/community volunteer input into the planning of school programs.

Parents and other community members know a great deal about their children. They especially know how school programs affect their children socially and emotionally because they often observe the effects of school activities on their children. Volunteers, however, because they work in the schools, can combine the perspective of parents with their observations and experience in the schools. Their in-put into program planning should be invaluable. The Urban Rural School Development Program, from which Teacher Corps derived

the community council concept, found that when closely involved community persons such as volunteers collaborate in planning with teachers and administrators the quality of program design was superior to programs in which such collaboration did not occur. Superior programs in this study were characterized by higher levels of participation by teachers in in-service, indications of more learning gains by students, and more community support of the schools.

The effect of volunteer participation on school and program support by the broader community.

There is compelling evidence in research and in experiences of effective schools and programs that community involvement is a powerful factor in the success of such schools. One important kind of involvement of parents is through volunteer work. Because of their presence in the schools and their participation in the various programs, volunteers became strong supporters of and highly credible communication links to the broader community. If they have successful and fulfilling experiences in their volunteer work, they can be instrumental in forging a broad base of support in the community for the schools.

The effect of volunteer participation on the learning/teaching process.

Volunteers that come from the child's community can enhance the teaching learning process in powerful ways. One way is through role modeling. Role models are important because they are both a source of motivation as well as learning. The child can be motivated by a role model by desiring to emulate or be like the role model. Children select role modes. They can't be given to them. Children are realistic in their choices of role models which means that a child from poor and culturally different parents may not find it realistic to emulate an adult who appears too different in culture and affluence. They may decide that they have too many disadvantages to overcome "to be"

like their middle—class teachers or administrators. The presence of low-income, culturally different adults functioning competently in the schools increases the pool of role models for such children to choose from.

Children also learn from role models. They often learn some of the most difficult things to teach such as attitudes towards learning, and work habits. The child who observes the adult from his community demonstrating positive attitudes towards school, staff, and the activities in the school learns to hold these things in positive esteem.

Research indicates that community volunteers are often more successful in communicating explanations, ideas, and concepts to children than teachers. The reason appears to be that adults from the child's own community speak the child's language better than teachers even when the child's language is English, have many experiences in common with the child from which to draw examples, and often can relate more easily to the child.

Research also indicates that the amount of time a child spends on a task is strongly correlated with his learning gains. Research has further determined that on—task behavior is produced when the child receives immediate reinforcement, rapid feedback, small group instruction, direct teaching, oral reading, and diagnostic-prescriptive type of instruction. This kind of teaching is very hard to accomplish with only the teacher in the class. It requires a low adult-to-student ratio in the class. Volunteers in these classrooms could help achieve this kind of effective instruction.

Role modeling, language usage with examples from common experiences, lower student adult ratio, individualized instruction, all permit application of new knowledge about how children learn, i.e., on task time, reinforcement, rapid feedback, small groups, direct teaching, adult interaction; oral reading, and diagnostic-prescriptive teaching. Volunteers can offer such an array of

skills, abilities, resources in the broader community from industry, business, art, etc.

Summary of Rationale -- Why recruit/use volunteers?

Contributions of volunteer work to sustain and promote schools have been an American tradition rooted in the values of mutual assistance and self reliant communities of the frontier. More recently, specifically as a thrust of Teacher Corps programs, volunteerism has evolved not only as one aspect of community involvement necessary to improve the quality of schools, but also as one strategy to compensate for the inequality of educational opportunity that exists in our schools. Furthermore, changing conditions in the school environment -- namely, declining resources and soaring costs as well as new curricular approaches -- make it necessary for schools to reach out to constituents for resources such as volunteer work. The financial equivalent of the time and services that volunteers provide is enormous ($62,000,000 per year). The motivation of volunteerism has changed from altruism to use of volunteer experience to achieve the volunteers personal goals for job skills and experience. This could provide a vast pool of volunteer help for schools if they design programs to be of benefit mutually for school and volunteer.

Who volunteers/Sources of volunteers.

Although close involvement of the community with schools has been a tradition since the beginning of schools in this country, the nature of volunteerism and who volunteers has changed over the years. Knowing what these changes are in the volunteer pool is important to the effective recruitment of volunteers.

In the early history of our schools, when the establishment of schools was considered a local responsibility, volunteerism consisted of an everybody-pitch-in-and-help kind of volunteerism. The donation of land for the school, the building and the maintenance of it were a community effort involving virtually everybody. After the United States settled into its role as an industrial power in the world around the turn of the century, school systems began to organize and model themselves after the large successful corporations that were developing at that period in our history. The idea also developed that like successful businesses, schools should be governed and operated by boards of directors and professional administrators and staffs. The effect of a more business-like and professional operation has been to reduce much of the broad-based community involvement that characterized schools in early America. As the nation has evolved more and more into urban and suburban life, the reduction of community participation has accelerated. During these recent times, the main source of volunteers for schools has been housewives who in accord with the values of recent times stayed home to raise faimilies. While their husbands worked, these women have until recently comprised a vast pool of volunteers for all institutions, including the schools. Many of them have given their time freely, rarely expecting anything in return.

Those who recruit and work with volunteers report that those conditions now have changed radically. The causes are: (1) that the volunteer pool described above has been reduced by the necessity and/or desire of many women to work at paying jobs. (2) Those women who want to obtain jobs but have no skills or outdated skills, see volunteerism as a way to gain the skills and experience needed to qualify for jobs. The new reality is that most of today's volunteers expect to get something out of the experience in exchange for their volunteered services.

Who volunteers?

The volunteer experience must be mutually beneficial for the volunteer and the school. Altruism is now rarely a primary motivation for volunteers.

The volunteer pool is changing in other respects too. The rising incidence of single-parent families, mostly with women as the heads of such families has caused the need for many women to return to or enter the work force. Often the cheapest and most convenient way for them to obtain job skills and experience is volunteer work in the schools.

The consequence of these changes in our society is that volunteer work is no longer an outlet for women with time on their hands. It now must serve to provide real job experience and skills or volunteer positions will probably go unfilled. However, a school district that designs and organizes volunteer programs with the needs of the volunteers equally in mind with the needs of the schools should be able to tap a rich source of help for the children in schools. No source is richer and has more potential than the housewives or women heads of families who want skills and experience to join the work force.

Other sources of volunteers.

Senior citizens

Retired citizens are probably a more accurate description of this potential volunteer pool. Retired citizens have varied skills and experiences that the schools could use and many of them would enjoy using their skills if the opportunity were offered. Thier skills and experience go unused in most communities.

College and high school students

Young people need experiences that allow them to practice school-learned skills or to explore different types of work in order to make decisions about

careers. Often such experiences can be made more attractive to them by arranging for credit or for the volunteer experience to be integrated into courses.

Business and Industry.

Many businesses and industries have socially conscious management that encourages involvement of employees in community institutions such as the schools. Companies can provide many services ranging from releasing employees to tutor in schools to releasing employees to sponsor and advise student clubs and organizations.

Disabled people seeking to re-enter the work force.

Some volunteer programs have contacted medical institutions and arranged for persons facing long recovery or rehabilitation programs to volunteer in the schools. The right match between the recovering volunteer and the needs of the school can be of great mutual benefit.

Court referral programs.

Many relatively harmless court cases, such as traffic offenders, can work off fines by serving as volunteers in the schools. They would require careful screening, of course, but this source may yield some surprisingly useful volunteers.

Churches, unions, community organizations.

Many institutions, by their very nature, are potential sources of volunteers. They brings people together for the common purposes of the members. Most of these institutions need and pursue the good will of the broader community. The schools can be a useful place where these organizations can demonstrate their concern for the community beyond their organization's immediate interests.

Generating volunteers in low-income areas.

Parents as a source

As has been indicated before, gaining volunteers from among parents is becoming more difficult as many are working now. However, among these parents are many who would like to gain skills and experience to either obtain or upgrade their jobs. By consciously building these opportunities into volunteer experiences, volunteers can be attracted in low-income communities.

Another group of parents who form a potential pool of volunteers are those who don't wish to work, but who feel their basic skills are too weak to work with students.

The approach used by New York was initiated in 1970-71, with the aid of a grant from the New York Community Trust. Initial efforts demonstrated that volunteers of very limited education, with no specific skills and no experience in the working world, can become successful tutors in reading and in teaching English as a second language if they receive appropriate training, constant supervision, and encouragement. The fact that these volunteers literally and figuratively speak the same language as the pupils they tutor enables them to establish an instant rapport and an easy relationship which greatly enhance their effectiveness as tutors, school officials report. (Whaley, p. 34).

In a low-income Detroit community, the school principal goes to neighborhood block clubs and churches to invite and recruit black volunteers, first involving them in the work, then suggesting any training that might lead to further work. (Whaley, p. 34).

Parents in low-income areas can be recruited as volunteers, but doing so requires active reaching out, training, encouragement, and supervision along with meeting the volunteer's needs.

Make volunteering more convenient.

Low-income parents have much difficulty with many of the conveniences taken for granted in affluent communities. Organizations seeking volunteers in low-income communities should not assume that cars for transportation, money for gas or for public transportation, and child care are easily available. Volunteer program organizations should investigate the extent to which these matters reduce the pool of potential volunteers and arrange to provide them in some way.

Other ideas for generating volunteers in low-income areas.

In Eugene, Oregon, low-income children are the main beneficiaries of a "Big Brother—Big Sister" school aide program which focuses upon providing the youngsters with social and recreational activities. Several hundred disadvantaged students receive the "assists" afforded through the personal friendship of an adult. The volunteers in this program attend a training session each month to improve their interpersonal skills. There is a problem-solving format for the session. A newsletter also supports this program.

In Richard, TRY (Tutor Richard Youth) a tutoring program was begun in which students go to industry once a week to be tutored. Although the program has changed in character and tutoring is now a small part of it, the name has stuck. Students investigate what is going on at business sites. The programs in all but one case, are for 6th graders and junior high students, are not tied to the curriculum. The exception is that individuals from science classes go to Stafford Chemical.

To help recruit (and train) volunteers from poverty communities, New York City zeros in on a target area, employing a team made up of a credentialed teacher and a paraprofessional. The paraprofessional--a former school volunteer

and a member of the local community--inspires recruits with confidence that they can do the job. The paraprofessional also assists with follow-up supervision. The teacher, meanwhile, handles all the training and supervision and recommends specific remedial solutions to the volunteers after diagnosing the problems of the volunteer's tutees.

This paper has attempted to provide Teacher Corps projects with a persuasive rationale for the recruitment of volunteers. It also has attempted to convey some information about the changed conditions among the volunteer pool in this country and some strategies and sources for recruiting volunteers that these new conditions require. The literature on volunteerism is rich with ideas that Teacher Corps projects should draw upon. Those described here represent only the most salient.